

window

October 2008 issue two

news and views from Ability Housing Association

tell us your story

This is your newsletter;
we want to hear from you!

Get in touch with us by:



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Letter

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welcome to your newsletter

Welcome to the second edition of 'Window,' the newsletter for customers of Ability. Our first edition was very well received and your feedback has helped us to make this one even better.

I've been working hard with my team to put together a new plan for Ability. We want to grow and improve what we do. To do that we must do some important things:

- get better at listening to what you say and what you want
- reach more people who want to live independently
- improve our services, making them more flexible and offering you more choice
- look after our staff by providing them with leadership, training and support

All of these actions will support our vision for Ability, which is:

“...for people who want to live more independently to regard Ability as their first choice provider of housing and/or support services.”

You can read about some of the things we are improving in this edition of 'Window.' I hope you like what you see.

Please tell us what you think.

Best wishes,

David Williams, Chief Executive



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Ability Welcomes

Rosedene and Genesis House



In April of this year, Ability welcomed two new mental health schemes. Management of both schemes was transferred to us from Surrey County Council.

Genesis House, with eight self-contained flats, is located near Staines town centre and provides housing related support to eight service users. One Team Leader and three Housing Support Workers provide support twelve hours per day Monday through Friday and up to four hours on Saturday and Sunday. Genesis is a short-term service, which means service users may expect to move on to less supported accommodation within two years.

Rosedene, a large, shared house close to Woking town centre, provides support to ten mental health service users and is also designated a short-term service, with service users expected to move on within two years. This is a 24 hour scheme, staffed by one Team Leader and five Housing Support Workers, which provides support daily between 8:00AM and 11:00PM, including sleep-in cover.

Ability is pleased to welcome these schemes, their staff and especially their service users and service users to our family.

Talking and Meeting **With You**

Ability holds regular meetings and conferences, which are part of our commitment to you and to providing you with the best possible service.

Tenant meetings are held every three months at your scheme and attendees can expect to discuss such items as the *Compliments and Complaints Leaflet*, repairs and housing-related issues, Easy-Read documents and the role of the Housing Support Worker.

Tenant Consultative Groups (TCGs) are held every six months and you will usually visit another location (such as Brighton or Oxford) to discuss your support, listen to guest speakers and take part in group discussions.

Those of you who have attended these meetings know they can be fun and informative, with a chance to meet and mingle with your team and neighbours. If you have not yet attended a tenant meeting or TCG, please do, you will be guaranteed a fun time and a chance to give us your feedback.

Your Housing Support Worker, Team Leader or Service Manager will let you know when your next event is scheduled and will listen to your ideas and suggestions for the agenda.

See you next time!



Genesis Turns Ten

Genesis House turned ten years old in August. To mark the occasion and take advantage of the good weather, a barbecue was held on 27th August.

Representatives of Spelthorne Borough Council, Spelthorne Community Mental Health Team and the Supporting People team attended, along with service users and their friends and families. Ability staff from Support Services, Corporate Services and Housing Services were also in attendance.

Staff and service users from Genesis House and Rosedene worked tirelessly to plan and organise the day. Kevin Huse served as Head Chef for the day.



Thanks to all who attended and worked to make the celebration a great success!

YOU SAID, WE DID...

New Repairs Service Coming

As we get more homes, we hear what you are telling us about the importance of a quick and efficient repairs service, which is easy to contact and provides a good out of hours service for emergencies.

During this year we have been inviting tenders from experienced contractors who want to work with us to provide an excellent repairs service that meets your requirements.

We are now down to our final two contractors, who have both submitted very good proposals for working with us over the next five years. We will keep you informed of our progress through this last stage.

We hope the new service will be up and running in the new year.

As part of the new service, we intend to set up a call centre to take your repairs calls over the phone. This will ensure that new repair requests are ordered immediately and we will be able to ensure repairs are completed within agreed timescales.

We will be asking you how you think we are doing when the contract starts and you will have an important part to play in the future of this service.



Templars Lodge Celebrates its 20th Anniversary



After some planning and eager anticipation, Templars Lodge in Bracknell held its 20th anniversary party.

To mark this landmark occasion, residents and staff visited the Weathervane Pub in Bracknell for a celebratory meal which offered the chance for people to look back at how far Templars Lodge had progressed over the years.

Another, larger event is being planned, where it is hoped past residents and staff will join in and celebrate the part they have all played during this time.

20 years is a long time, and Ability has come a long way since Templars Lodge opened its doors to residents in 1988, but this major milestone for this ground-breaking scheme is certainly not passing unnoticed!

Coming Up Roses

We visit Jonathan Hale at his home at Gordon Clifford Court in Bracknell



Jonathan Hale has been interested in gardening for many years, but says he was only able to begin gardening in earnest when he acquired his Ability property with a rear patio, five years ago.

All year, Jonathan's garden displays vibrant flowers and plants in many colours. This summer, the garden is dominated by roses, fuchsias and

hanging baskets. In the winter, the garden features jasmine, hellebores and clematis cirrhosa. Spring bulbs erupt from February to May.



Jonathan manages to pack a lot into the patio and path; the winter and spring gardens are decorated ornamentally with squash and serve as bird feeding stations all year.



How did he do it? Says Jonathan, "when I first moved in there was just a load of Euonymus there, which had to be dug out. I expect Ability's groundsmen had once planted it long ago. It was necessary to erect some posts and trellis around the door, to which I have attached wind break mesh. This keeps the wind off me and acts as support for climbers."

All of his hard work has paid off...Jonathan's garden was featured in the August edition of *BBC Gardeners' World* magazine. Jonathan says, "I have been delighted to see it in print in this way. It was a very pleasant surprise!"

Winning Move

Wayne Bridger's Move to Independence

Wayne Bridger moved to Cavell House in Farnham in October 2007 and moved to his own flat in May 2008 - this is the quickest move on to date in Farnham.

Having previously lived in a shared house, Wayne showed exceptional living skills, such as cooking, budgeting and travelling locally using public transport. Ability staff at Cavell House provide Wayne with support around handling his finances and attending medical appointments. Wayne has recently begun to expand his cooking skills...his favourite dish is chicken with mushroom sauce, jacket potato and broccoli.

Wayne is extremely pleased to have moved to his own flat and loves having his own furniture. He feels confident knowing that the staff at Cavell House are available to support him and Wayne visits Cavell House when he attends his Day Centre, which is close by.

Wayne's advice to anyone who wants to move on to independence? "Don't get stressed. Talk to the support staff; that's what they are there for."



More stories in our next issue.



What is Abuse?

Abuse is defined as one person causing harm to another person.

This harm can take several forms: **physical** (hitting or pushing someone), **emotional** (shouting at someone or calling them names), **sexual** (touching someone inappropriately or making inappropriate comments), **financial** (taking money from someone), **neglect** (ignoring someone's care or support needs) and **intimidation** (frightening or bullying someone).

If you feel that any of these things have happened to you, you can tell your Housing Support Worker, a senior Manager at Ability, your Care Manager or Supporting People Officer. Please check with a member of staff to see if yours is a CSCi-registered service.

All our staff have had training in PoVA (protection of vulnerable adults) and will be able to support you in these circumstances. Training certificates for staff will be on file at your scheme office.

We have policies and procedures in place to help us to protect you from abuse and to support you if you are the victim of abuse. Please contact us if you would like to have copies of any of these policies or procedures.



This issue of 'Window' is the result of a joint effort between Ability and you.

Wayne Bridger, Erica Holden, Tim Murgatroyd and **Michael John** attended a meeting at our offices and helped us to create a newsletter that you want. You will notice a lot more personal stories about you and your fellow tenants and service users.

The next issue will be out in the spring. If you have any ideas or would like to attend the next panel meeting, please contact us. Our e-mail, phone number and address are on the front cover.

Thanks to everyone who attended the last meeting and who contributed their own stories to this issue. We look forward to your continued input.



Online Resources



The Internet is a leading form of communication and the most widely-used means of obtaining information.

Here is a list of websites you may find useful. If you know of others, which you would like to see published in the next Newsletter, please contact us or tell your Housing Support Worker.

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/index.htm>

Easy access to the public services you use and the information you need, delivered by the government. Click on the link "disabled people."

<http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/index.html>

For anyone looking to return to or start work

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk>

Department of Work and Pensions

<http://www.mind.org.uk>

Mind - for better mental health

<http://www.mencap.org.uk>

Mencap - the voice of learning disability

<http://www.dlf.org.uk>

Disabled Living Foundation - advice for older and disabled people

<http://www.asksara.org.uk>

Ask Sara - DLF's online assessment tool

<http://www.mertonconnected.com>

Merton Connected - for activities and events in Meton

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/ouch>

BBC – Ouch! - the BBC's website for people with disabilities

<http://www.dsa-uk.com>

Down's Syndrome Association - help for people with Down's Syndrome

<http://www.nas.org.uk>

National Autistic Society - offering help and support to people with Autism and your families

<http://www.ceacard.co.uk>

Cinema Exhibitors' Association Limited - offering a card allowing your guest free tickets to the cinema

www.paradigm-uk.org

Paradigm - this site aims to be your 'one-stop-shop' for all of the relevant available information on the internet

Meet...

Paul
Rickson



What is your name?

My name is Paul Rickson.

How old are you?

I am 30 years old.

Where do you live?

I live at Loddon Court, Earley.

What do you like best about Ability?

They helped me to gain independent living.

What kind of support does Ability give you?

I receive regular support with budgeting, shopping and paying my bills.

What is your proudest achievement?

I am very proud of having gotten my job and working in the office.

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy going out to pubs, watching football and playing games.

What irks you?

I do not like being put in the spotlight when I have not prepared anything to say.

What would you say to someone who is considering moving to more independent living?

The best things about independent living are having a front door key to your own flat, coming and going as you please and having as much or as little support as you need.

meet the team

The Rosedene team at Ability is part of our Support Services team and is responsible for providing housing and community support to tenants with mental health issues.

Rosedene, based in Woking, is staffed 24 hours per day. The team of experienced staff have transferred to Ability from Surrey County Council, who formerly managed the scheme. Service users are expected to move on to more independent accommodation within two years.

The team provides varied support, such as dealing with repairs and benefits, to supporting tenants with their mental health needs.



Suzi Powell - Team Leader



Brenda Carter
Housing Support Worker

Antonia Whitten
Housing Support Worker



Denise Collyer
Housing Support Worker



Marc Hubbard
Housing Support Worker

Life on Wheels

By Matt Wales 1989

Life on wheels, it really ain't so bad
Some days I'm happy, some days sad
If you could see what I can see
Sometimes when people look at me
And look away ashamedly.

Not really knowing what to say
How to act or help if they can
Its as if they cannot accept I'm a man
But I'll show 'em all; just give me a chance
Have they ever seen a man in a
wheelchair dance?

I don't really care when all's said and done
I am just the same as anyone
the same feelings and fears
the same smiles, laughter and tears
You may not even see the true side of me.

Only certain people see what I can see
Life in a chair it's hard it is true
But it isn't my fault
and I could never blame you.



Matt lives with his partner, Jan, at Lakeside Close in Essex.

Life on Wheels is Matt's first poem.

We would like more of your poetry, so please, budding poets, submit your work!

in the next issue

...Coming next spring

- * More success stories
- * Talking with Tim Murgatroyd about community issues...
- * Meet the team at Essex Services...